

REMARKS

Claims 1-16, 20, 21, 29, and 55 are currently pending in the subject application and are presently under consideration.

Favorable reconsideration of the subject patent application is respectfully requested in view of the comments herein.

I. Rejection of Claims 1-16, 20, 21, 29, and 55 Under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-16, 20, 21, 29, and 55 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Heckerman *et al.* (Inferring Informational Goals from Free-Text Queries: A Bayesian Approach) in view of Miller *et al.* (US 6,741,188). This rejection should be withdrawn for at least the following reason. Heckerman *et al.*, alone or in combination with Miller *et al.*, does not teach or suggest each and every limitation of applicants' claimed invention.

To reject claims in an application under §103, an examiner must establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. A *prima facie* case of obviousness is established by a showing of three basic criteria. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or to combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references when combined) ***must teach or suggest all the claim limitations***. See MPEP §706.02(j) (emphasis added).

Applicants' claimed invention relates to information retrieval, and more particularly to predicting high-level informational goals and the appropriate level of detail for an answer from observable linguistic features in queries. To this end, independent claim 1 (and similarly independent claims 29 and 55) recites ***inferring one or more preferred levels of detail for an answer***. Heckerman *et al.*, alone or in combination with Miller *et al.*, does not teach or suggest such claimed aspects.

Heckerman *et al.* relates to a Bayesian approach to modeling the relationship between words in a user's query for assistance and the informational goals of the user (See Abstract). The cited document discloses inferring a probability distribution over a set of user goals given a user query (See section 2, column 1). Examiner admits that Heckerman *et al.* does not teach or

suggest inferring a level of detail for an answer based on at least one of an inferred age of a user, a physical location of the user, and an application being employed by the user (*See* Office Action dated July 11, 2006, p. 3), and offers Miller *et al.* to cure these deficiencies. Miller relates to a system for directing information to specific geographic locations. However, Miller *et al.* does not disclose or suggest inferring a level of detail for a response to a query.

Inferring a level of detail improves the quality of a search for information by answering more appropriately the user's query. For example, a practicing engineer and a professor may make the same query, but desire a differing level of detail in the answer. For the query, "what is the derivative of $3x$," the engineer may only desire the simplest answer of "3," where the professor may prefer a more lengthy, pedagogical response, or perhaps a mathematical proof and so forth, for teaching or research purposes. Miller *et al.* discloses determining relevant information that is to be delivered to the user. However applicants' claimed invention teaches answering the user's query not only by determining which information, but the level of detail, as well as the preferred tone, format, language, and delivery of the answer is also inferred and delivered, which Miller *et al.* does not teach or suggest.

Independent claim 1 (and similarly independent claims 29 and 55) recites *the inference engine further inferring one or more preferred levels of detail for an answer based at least on one of an inferred age of a user, physical location of the user, and an application being employed by the user*. Examiner notes that Miller *et al.* discloses providing information relating to the physical location of a user. However, the document does not disclose *inferring a preferred level of detail for an answer* based on an inferred age of a user, physical location of a user, nor an application being employed by the user. Therefore, Miller *et al.* does not teach all the amended claim limitations.

In view of the foregoing, Miller *et al.* does not remedy the admitted deficiencies of Heckerman *et al.* with respect to independent claims 1, 29, and 55. Accordingly, the rejection of claims 1, 29, and 55, and associated dependent claims 2-16, 20, and 21, should be withdrawn.

CONCLUSION

The present application is believed to be in condition for allowance in view of the above comments. A prompt action to such end is earnestly solicited.

In the event any fees are due in connection with this document, the Commissioner is authorized to charge those fees to Deposit Account No. 50-1063 [MSFTP215US].

Should the Examiner believe a telephone interview would be helpful to expedite favorable prosecution, the Examiner is invited to contact applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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